BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF
BEN LESLIE GRAHAM, JR.

I was born on August 8, 1918, in an old two room farm house located on the farm of my Grandfather Ephriam Lafayette Pass. The farm was located about nine miles west of Goldthwaite, Texas, and was at the southeast corner of the confluence of the Colorado river and the Pecan Bayou. My parents were Ben Leslie Graham, Sr., born August 8, 1891---as you can see, I was born on his birthday! My Mother was Eddie April Pass, born April 6, 1895. I was one of three children. The first born was my sister, Katie Ruth Margurite. She was born October 9, 1915. I was the second one born. The third born was my sister Thelma Lavene, born September 9, 1920.

My father was born in Sweetwater, Texas, the son of Jehu and Rebecca Ann Graham. Grandfather Jehu was a son of William Smith Graham, who was a son of Jesse I Graham, who was a son of John Graham.

My Mother was the daughter of Dovie Alice Turner and Ephriam Lafayette Pass. She was born at Copperas Cove, Texas, on the Cowhouse creek. Mother,s father was a descendant of the PASS who repaired the Liberty Bell, after it was broken after being rang the first time it was used.

The place I was born was land where the Commanche Indians roamed before white men came to the area, also still lived in the area after white men settled there. There are rocks there where the Commances ground their mesquite beans and other grains, also thousands of arrowheads have been found there, and are still being found occasionally.It was a place abundant with rattle snakes and cactus. I can vividly remember when staying with Grandfather and Grandmother Pass, as a very small boy, that Grandfather would take me to the river with him on occasions, and often kill one or more rattle snakes along the some ¼ to ½ mile to the river. We would also pick up arrowheads along the way! I wish I still had all of those arrowheads we used to pick up.

Although I was born at Goldthwaite, we never did live there. Mother went to be with her parents when Katie and I were born. We three children spent lots of time in the summer with Grandmother and Grandfather Pass. Daddy was a school teacher, and would sell the Hulburt bibles and books in the summer time, to "make ends meet". I remember very little of my existence until I was about three years old. The first place I remember living was in San Angelo, Texas, at a place called Lakeview, in the northeast part of town. It was apparently a new area of town and there were blocks with sidewalks installed all around them, but no houses! I can remember spending hours upon hours pushing myself around those sidewalks on my little wooden "kiddie car". Wheels and all were wooden! My Grandfather and Grandmother Graham lived about a block or two from us and we played in their yard a lot, also. Daddy had one living brother, and ten sisters all living. I can remember my aunties playing with me in Grandad,s "forbidden" chicken house, especially Aunt Elsie. I remember, too, that Grandad had a corn patch. My sister Katie and my Aunt Grace used to get me out in the corn patch and go and hide and have me look for them. When I would get close to them, they would run farther away, so I could not find them! Perhaps I should not tell this, but I will, anyway---I can

remember that they would take me out in the corn patch and proceed to pull my pants down. I did not know why they did that, at the time, and still am not sure!!

After living at Lakeview, we moved to another place in San Angelo for a year, then moved out a few miles west of San Angelo, across the North Concho River, to a place called McGill, or Twin Mountains. Daddy taught school a year or two there, then we moved to Cap, Texas, southwest of Abilene. I spent my first three years of grade school there, then we moved to Clyde, Texas,about fifteen miles east of Abilene.

The remainder of my school years, through high school, were spent at Clyde. Daddy and Grandad Pass tore a house down at a community called Midway, where he was going to teach, and re-built it on a ten acre farm 1½ miles east of Clyde. We raised apples, berries, grapes, sweet potatos, etc. I had a dog, named Ponto, and he was my constantant companion. I had him several years and one day I observed that he was "foaming" at the mouth. My parents decided that he might be a "mad dog", and that he should be killed. When they said they, probably my Dad, would take him out and kill him, I said "No, I will do it". It broke my heart that I had to get rid of him, but I knew it had to be done to protect him from becoming the type of dog that my parents said he could become. I took him down to the back of the field, crying my eyes out all the way, with my 22 rifle and a shell in it. I loved him and tried to tell him it was best for him, then reluctantly put the gun to his head, and I can say, without reservation, "Don,t EVER let a child do something like that!!" To this day I have never gotten over that experience. The worst part of it was, that the next day Mrs. Gray, who lived the only house east of us came up to our house and said that Ponto had gotten into the lye soap that she was making, and then we knew why he was "foaming". I still have to brush back the tears when I remember that pittiful look Ponto gave me, as I pulled the trigger. I never shot that gun again.

I graduated from Clyde High School in 1936 and that fall I entered Hardin Simmons University in Abilene. I worked for the National Youth Administration---NYA--- to pay part of my tuition. I distinctly remember that when all the boys and men in the mens dormitories were going and coming freely and having much fun, I was busy cleaning and painting <u>all</u> the screens on those dormitory windows! I deeply resented that, at the time!!

That winter I got a job as delivery boy for the Granger Floral and Nursery located at Cedar Creek and Albany Road. I worked part time while going to school. While going to Hardin Simmons I felt that to continue my schooling there would lead to either a teacher or preacher position. I did not feel called to the ministry, nor did I want to be a teacher, so I decided, against my parents will, I'm sure, not to go to school there and to work full time at the nursery. I was energetic, and gradually progressed from delivery boy to production foreman, then manager. Mr. Granger wanted to retire and wanted me to buy his business. "HOW", I asked him. since I had no money. He said he would sell me the business, lock, stock, and barrel and let me pay it in ten years at $4,000 a year, to be paid out of the profits, and if it didn't make that much over and above my salary, I would pay only what it made that year. Thja was an excellent opportunity for me and my wife and young son, but

In 1937 I took leave of absense of my job, during "slack" time and took a vacation. I went, with a friend from Clyde, R. M. Barrington, to Utah, to see a boy we knew at Hooper, Utah, who was from Clyde. We did not stay long in Utah, and I wanted to go back and see more of that country, so went back in 1938. I met a girl while working across a railroad from where this family lived. I saw her from a distance of about 150 yards one day and I said to myself, "That,s the girl for me!". I went over to her house, across the tracks from where we were staying and working, and asked her if she would go on a picnic with me. I knew that she thought that was certainly a strange thing for a stranger to approach her and ask! She had a shocked look on her face and said, probably to get rid of me, that she would have to ask her Mother. Her Mother said , "NO!". But we talked a few minutes and her Mom said that she could invite me inside.

This girls father had passed away that spring and the family consisted of the Mother, and six children. One son by a previous marriage, then five children, of whom Fern, the girl I met, was the oldest. Fern was 16, had dark brown or black hair and "black" eyes. She was the most beautiful girl I ever saw, and still is! We went on picnics, hikes, and dated in the home, playing music, singing, etc. Needless to say it was love at first sight for me. I went back to Texas to my job, but corresponded with her till I went back to Utah in August of 1939. We married October 18, 1939, and went to Texas. I was no doubt the happiest, but dumbest man in America. I did a lot of things that probably shouldn't have been done, but my beautiful Sugarbabe put up with my antics.

We wanted to have a family. I always wanted six children, though I do not know why I wanted that number! On July 24, 1941 we had our first child, a boy named Ben Richard. He was born at Hendricks Memorial Hospital in Abilene. It was expensive---the delivery room, recovery room and one nights stay at the hospital was $20.00!!! The doctors bill for her care was a whopping $65.00!

As I was contemplating the purchase of Mr. Granger's business, the "day of infamy" occured December 7, 1941, when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. That event changed the lives of millions of young people in America, including ours. I was told by my draft board that I would no doubt have to go in the armed services right away unless I was in an essential industry. Recognizing this, Fern and I made a decision that we would move to Utah, where I would work in essential industry, and she would be with her family. She loved my family, but I felt she would be better satisfied with her family when I went in the armed services. I got a job with the Navy, and because of my job and the top secret clearance I was given because of my job, I kept getting deferments from Washington, D.C. I finally decided I could not live this way, getting greetings from the President, then getting defered, then more greetings, then more deferments, etc. I entered the Army in early 1945, spending my tour of duty in the Pacific Theater until I was discharged July 31, 1946.

We had our second son April 9, 1944, born in Ogden, Utah. We names him James Leslie. Our third child, another boy, was born in Ogden, and we named him Sidney Lynn. He was born June 24, 1947. After these three fine boys, we decided that we maybe ought to wait a few years before having any more children, and perhaps that would

change our pattern of boy---boy---boy! So, after a little over five years, we had our forth child. We named HIM Eddie Lee! The long wait did not change the pattern!! Let me say here, that we wanted every one of those beautiful boys, and were not the least bid disappointed with any of them. Since we realized we were going to have a little boy with nobody to grow up with close to his age, we decided we would have another child as soon as we could. Eddie Lee was born July 27, 1952. On August 7. 1954 we had our fifth child. Born 3 hours and 20 minutes before my birthdate, we named HER Rebecca Alice, after her two Great Grandmothers.

After returning from the Army in 1946, I went back to work for the government, and in March of 1947, I started my own nursery business, too. During the 1950's I also went to WEBER University in Ogden for 5½ years at night, taking 15 to 17 credit hours each quarter. I also worked for the American Service Bureau as an insurance investigator. Two jobs, a business, college and family took up all my time, but I was also Sunday School Superintendent, song leader, deacon, trustee, treasurer, Training Union Director, and on several committees of our young church for several years.

When Fern and I married, she was a Mormon and I was a Baptist. When the Mormon Bishop pronounced our wedding vows, and we repeated then, he then told Fern "Now you have a mission---to convert your husband to Mormonism". We did not argue about religion, Fern going to her church and I to mine. But since the Mormon "mission" in Abilene had few or no people in attendance most of the time, she was willing to go with me a lot. Fern was, and still is, a very sincere, honest and faithful wife, Mother, and always concerned for her relatives and friends. She always wanted to see me accept her Mormon "religion". As she began her endeavors, we both agreed that we would listen to her Mormon people tell us about Mormonism, and that we would also search the bible to see what Gods word said. She knew that I believed the bible to be true and to be the infallable Word of God. As we had our discussions, sometimes in our home and sometimes going to their "cottage meetings", apparently God began to convict her of her need of accepting Jesus Christ, and Him alone for her salvation. After much loving prayer and sincere efforts, Fern began to realize that her belief, her church, her leaders, did not have what she really needed. She began to realize that she was unsaved, even though she had been as good as she could be, morally, physically, and spiritually. She recognized that something was lacking, though she did not admit it directly to anybody as far as I know.

We went to Texas the summer of 1950. While visiting relatives there, we went to church with my uncle Sidney E. Pass. A revival meeting was in progress at Temple Baptist Church in Abilene, and I remember that Rev. Weldon, a brother to a good friend and neighbor of ours, Marvin Weldon and his wife Velma, was preaching the revival that Sunday morning. Fern said the preacher was preaching "right at me", and "I knew everything he said was for me and it was true. I felt that she was under conviction heavily and leaned over to her and asked her if she wanted to trust in Jesus Christ. She immediately said "Yes!", took my hand and led me down the aisle with her and made her confession of faith and acceptance of Jesus, and while there at the altar, I re-dedicated my life to the Lord. What a glorious occasion. I had secretly prayed for this to happen since we married almost eleven years before this day, July 5, 1950. She did NOT

want to be baptized, or become a member of the Baptist church there. She said all along that she had already been baptized, and did not need to be baptized again. One week later we were in St. Joe, Arkansas, visiting my parents. During that week she had been doing a lot of thinking on her own. I never did say anything to her about the subject of baptism or church membership again. We went to church at a little church down the road from my parents place, toward a little town along the Buffalo River. The church was about one half way toward Gilbert. Much to the surprise of a lot of the congregation, Fern, at the invitation, went forward presenting herself as a candidate for baptism and for membership in Zions Light Baptist Church!!! It was truly a glorious and fantastic vacation we had in Texas and Arkansas that year!

We came back to Utah, united in His love and united in purpose and committment to our Saviour. We helped organize a Baptist mission and it started in our livingroom. On April 1, 1951 we organized and chartered the First Southern Baptist Church of Clearfield. It was the second Southern Baptist church in Utah, the first one being in Roosevelt, pastored by Rev. Harold Dillman. He was a former Mormon Bishop who was cooverted to Christianity. Our church began missions in many locations and several have grown into churches. We served in missions at Arsenal Villa, now Roy, Sahara Village, now Layton, Bountiful, Brigham City, Kaysville, Ben Lomond, (Ogden) and Calvary in Ogden, Plain City, Evanston, Wyo., Logan, and others. God has bountifully and spiritually blessed the work of Southern Baptists in Utah since that date of April 1, 1951!

Our five children are all Christians, and several of our 17 grandchildren have made professions of faith in Jesus Christ. We continue to pray that all of them will come to know Him.

If there is any good attribute in my character, I owe it to my parents and grandparents and some wonderful Christian relatives. I never knew any of them to ever use any vulgar, or "cuss" words, except my father. When I was about 9 years of age at Clyde, my Daddy was putting a tin roof on the chicken house one hot summer day. He was on a ladder nailing the tin on. He somehow dropped the only nail he had, and had to climb down and get some more. As he dropped the nail he said "shucks"! Ha. I attribute my wonderful life of over 51 years of married happiness to my sweet and wonderful and beautiful Sugarbabe. She has been an inspiration, a joy and a blessing to me, as a mother of our children and a devoted wife. I attribute and give to God all that I have and all that I am. No person on earth has been more blessed by our Lord than I have.

Incidentally, my Mothers parents were married for 72 years before Grandmother Pass passed away. My parents were married for 66 years before Daddy passed away. I must say, too, but not incidentally, that my two sweet and wonderful sisters have been an inspiration to me, and to this day, I still lean heavily on their love and friendship, though they may not know it.

At the present time, February 13, 1991, all our five children and 17 grandchildren live within five miles of us, except one, who lives about 10 miles away. We enjoy them very much and feel it a great priviledge to have such a close-knit family. I cherish my heritage from my parents, grandparents, and relatives.

Much of the data I have on the Graham and Pass families was gathered over the years by my mother. Mother never threw anything away! Over the years Daddy also related a lot about his folks and I have a lot of that information recorded. Daddy passed away on April 20, 1981 at age 89, almost 90. Mother passed away October 11, 1989, at age 94, almost 95. Both Mother and Daddy were very precious and wonderful parents and wonderful Christians.